

## Linked by OTTSTF

**Series:** [Stranger Connections \[2\]](#)

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**Genre:** Gen, Nightmares, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD

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**Characters:** Bob Newby (mentioned), Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Will Byers

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**Summary:**

Despite being set free from the Mind Flayer's grasp over a month ago, Will still worries that they may be linked somehow, thanks to recent symptoms.

Unknown to him, the Mind Flayer may not be the only link he has developed.

# 1. Symptoms

## Author's Note:

Welp, I can't help but keep writing. This is the beginning of my attempt to move onto the effects that the Upside Down has had on the characters, which I am very excited to explore. As such, I don't want to rush too much out in one go and risk producing a bad story.

You shouldn't need to wait for the remaining chapters, however, so check back frequently if you're interested!

Hope you enjoy!

### *Will the Wise.*

Will glances over the title of his drawing. As he stares at the work, he thinks back to the time he drew it. Times when his worst fear could be his mother's reaction when he returns home late, after a ten-hour Dungeons and Dragons session. His worst injury had been a scrape to his knee after falling off his bike. The only monsters he knew were perhaps school bullies.

### *Zombie Boy.*

His glance moves to a much later piece. He hears the voices of fellow school kids mumbling his new title behind his back. He remembers the night he woke up in hospital, without a clue as to how he had got there. He remembers the cold, the fog, and the horrible stench of the Upside Down as he lay in Castle Byers, trying to remain as quiet as possible.

He tries his hardest to take his memory away from the moment the Demogorgon had taken him and used him as an incubator. He re-reads the title to distract himself. *Zombie Boy*. He remembers the Snow Ball; being asked to dance. A small smile plays at his lips.

### *Bob Newby, Superhero.*

His attention is finally drawn to his most recent work. His smile immediately melts away into a frown as he remembers the man that

made his family happy again. The man that had fought his way through the lab to save them all. He's thankful he didn't see Bob's demise; he's sure that would be the only image he could think of right now. He remembers that morning on the way to school, when Bob had told him his method of banishing Mr. Baldo from his own nightmares.

'Go away!' He hears Bob's voice in his head. Despite this talk being the reason he'd become possessed, he still appreciates the help from Bob. He didn't know that Will was seeing current-time visions, or that he'd fall victim to the Mind Flayer by not running. He wouldn't have said any of it if he'd known. Bob had always been trying to help, in any way he could.

Will lays back down onto his bed, and tries to focus on the good memories of Bob, his friends, and his family. He doesn't want to think of the deaths, the monsters, the lab or the Mind Flayer. *'It's over. It's all over.'* he tells himself. But his latest symptoms make him worry otherwise. Thankfully, he hasn't experienced any 'episodes' since he had been freed from the Mind Flayer's grasp; but nightmares, zoning out into daydreams, hearing things in the back of his mind... those symptoms still persisted.

*'Those can be put down to PTSD'* he tells himself. But he's unsure about his latest symptoms. He's recently been experiencing light-headedness out of nowhere. He could be drawing, talking to his friends, absolutely anything, and suddenly feel light-headed, for no apparent reason, and he can't help but worry. He can't help but think that this *must* be related to his experiences, his traumas.

*'Is part of... him... still inside me?'* he wonders. The thought alone makes him shiver.

Perhaps his latest symptom is the weirdest of all, however, and he struggles to think of any possible reason or cause. They seemed as spontaneous as his episodes of light-headedness. Usually they'd happen at the same time, but not always. He'd feel a slight tingle at the back of his head, followed by a strangely short nosebleed. *'What on Earth could be causing that?'* he wonders.

He shrugs the thought off, as he turns onto his side to get comfortable. But then his thoughts linger on one more thing. A person. Somebody who he's not properly interacted with as of yet, but from what everyone else has told him, he wonders if this person

might know what his symptoms could mean. He finally comes to a decision.

*'I need to see Jane.'*

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Darkness. The sound of water beneath her feet as El strolls around in the empty void.

Or so she thought. A whimper sounds from behind her. She suddenly turns towards the direction of the whimpers. In the distance, she sees a bed, with someone laying in it. She begins to walk towards the bed for a closer look.

Whoever lays there stirs in their sleep repeatedly. Head turning from one direction to another, followed by their quiet whimpers. On closer inspection, she realises she's watching Will, and figures that this must be what a nightmare looks like from the outside. She frowns slightly as she assumes this, feeling sorry for Will. Has he not suffered enough? Why can't his dreams be happy? Why can't he be free from his torture?

She instinctively tries to think of how to comfort him. She's well aware that contact typically causes the other person to vanish, but she persists anyway. She reaches out and places her hand on his shoulder.

*W-what?* she quickly thinks as she feels Will's shoulder under her hand. His eyes suddenly blink open, staring into her own, with a large gasp as he awakens. She jumps back, and Will shortly vanishes into smoke. The darkness fades away, revealing the rest of Will's bedroom around his empty bed. She spins around to grasp her surroundings; vines cover the walls, the window is smashed. Outside, trees are dead, scarce of leaves. She realises where she is, and panic quickly builds.

She screams Will's name, hoping that she can break free of this world and return to where she belongs.

"Will!?" she screams three more times before she hears a loud, sudden wind through the broken window. Her attention is drawn to it immediately, but she backs away.

"W-Will?" she whimpers herself, before a dark smoke flies in. She screams, knowing full well what this smoke that surrounds her is. She drops to the floor and covers her head with her arms, curling into herself in hope that the Mind Flayer can't claim her. She continues screaming as it surrounds her, reaching closer with each passing second.

El's eyes blink open and she lunges into a sitting position with a gasp. She looks around to find herself in her bedroom, on her bed. Covers and pillows lay on the floor as a result of her stirring.

She eventually gets up to look through her window. Opening the blinds, she barely sees the trees surrounding them through the night's darkness, but they are alive and well. Silence, minus slight gusts of wind, surround the cabin. She slowly feels relieved that she has broken free of her nightmare, but quickly remembers Will; how she had managed to physically touch him in the void. She'd never been able to make physical contact in the void before; was that part of her nightmare too?

She gets back into bed, picking up the covers and pillows and tucking herself back in. She stares at the ceiling for a moment, wondering why she had seen Will, how she had managed to physically touch him, and why doing so sent her into the Upside Down. Was Will's nightmare passed onto her? How? Was her contact with Will real, or part of a nightmare? These questions eventually lead to one thought. She turns onto her side to get comfortable, and comes to a decision.

*'I need to see Will.'*

## 2. Meet Up

08:17

Will glances over to his clock as he awakens. With a yawn, he sits up and stretches, before clumping out of his bed. He leaves his bedroom and heads for the bathroom, to begin his morning routine.

Joyce is in the kitchen making breakfast, as Jonathan washes the remaining dishes. Will slowly walks through the passageway towards them, and announces himself upon seeing them.

"Hey guys." he says quietly.

Joyce flinches at the sound of his voice.

"Jesus, Will! You're going to kill me one of these days!" he rolls his eyes. He could come running in screaming or creep in as quiet as a mouse, either way she's going to jump at his presence. He takes a seat, staring at his hands and twiddling his thumbs without saying a word, before Joyce interrupts him.

"Hey, Will, what's the matter?" she asks, as if knowing what he'd experienced through his sleep.

"Oh, nothing." he responds, biting his lip, not wanting to talk about it just yet. Joyce is unconvinced.

"Will, come on. I'm your mother. I know when something's wrong." she states matter-of-factly.

"You know you can talk to me."

Will lets out a sigh, knowing he's not going to get away from this easy. He reflects on the thoughts he'd had before going to sleep, about his symptoms, his random episodes of light-headedness and spontaneous nose-bleeds. He considers talking about those, before he remembers the nightmare he'd had. Stuck in the Upside Down before being awakened by a hand on his shoulder, upon awakening, seeing Jane standing beside him; gone following a blink. He ponders for a moment before telling his mother.

"I- I had another nightmare."

Joyce frowns, well aware of what his nightmares usually consist of.

Will continues.

"I was in my bed but in the Upside Down. Nothing else was there, but there was a loud wind coming from outside. I'm sure it was *him*." he announces.

Joyce's expression only saddens. "It's not real any more, Will. *It's* gone. We got it out of you, and Jane closed the gate."

He considers the possibility, but the mentioning of Jane causes him to wonder why he'd saw her *after* waking up. He decides he may as well mention it.

"Yes, but that's not even the weirdest part. I felt a hand on my shoulder, and that woke me up. But it wasn't in the dream. I-" he pauses, thinking of how stupid this is going to sound.

"You..?" Joyce urges him to continue.

"I... saw Jane." he finally announces. This grabs Jonathan's attention; he stops what he's doing to listen in. "She was standing beside me one second, but the next she was gone." Will finishes.

Joyce and Jonathan share a glance at each-other, confusion in both of their faces. Will's never mentioned Jane being in his dreams before.

"See?" Jonathan begins. "Nothing to worry about, she's even protecting you in your dreams!"

Will glances at Jonathan and furrows his eyebrows slightly. "She wasn't *in* my dream!" he reminds him. "I saw her *after* waking up!"

Jonathan's face shows more confusion yet again. He wants to think that Will's mind was simply playing tricks on him, but his gut feeling whispers otherwise. Unsure of what to think, he ducks his head slightly before turning back to the dishes he was previously washing.

Will ducks his head as well, remembering the decision he had come to before falling asleep. He turns to his mother and states his wish.

"I want to see Jane."

Joyce tilts her head slightly, before responding. "You think she

might've actually been there?"

Will considers the possibility; how odd it sounds but also how possible it could be, knowing Jane.

"I... don't know. But I want to talk to her about it anyway, you know?"

Joyce nods her head before Will continues.

"But not only that, I wanted to ask her if she might know what my symptoms mean. The light-headedness and the nose-bleeds."

Joyce considers this before nodding her head again. "I think that's a good idea Will. I'm not sure she'll know, but that girl... she's quite amazing. She could have an idea."

Will's confidence grows as he hears his own thoughts emerge from his mother's mouth.

"When do you think I can see her?" he asks.

Joyce looks to the phone, before reminding herself that any conversation concerning any of this, especially Jane, no matter how discrete, is a risk not worth taking, ever.

"I'll pop in to the station in a bit, see if I can ask Hop." she smiles reassuringly.

Her smile is mirrored onto Will's face. He's thankful that his mother understands his reasoning, and is willing to help. "Thanks, mom." he responds, before leaning in to give her a kiss on the cheek.

"Of course!" she responds. "Let me finish nyour breakfast so I can start getting ready. I'll head out then." she gets up to continue making her breakfast.

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08:19

Eleven sits up, and immediately begins thinking about what she'd seen. The Upside Down comes to mind first, how real it felt, and how she felt the wind around her as the Mind Flayer circled her. Then she remembers Will, laying in his bed, turning his head every few seconds. She remembers her own shock as she touched him, and the way he stared directly at her as he woke up.

What could this possibly mean? Does it mean *anything*? Was it real, or all part of her nightmare? Her thoughts are interrupted by Hopper.

"Good morning, kiddo." he says from behind her bedroom door. "I've made your favourite."

She slowly stands from her bed and walks out to the table where two Triple-Decker Eggo Extravaganzas sit. She takes a seat, and uses her knife and fork to shovel a piece of her breakfast into her mouth. She smiles as the taste lands on her tongue.

"Sleep well?" Hopper asks simply, before taking a bite of his own.

She glances up at him. "Yes." she answers.

*'Friends don't lie.'* she hears Mike's voice in her head, before deciding to tell Hopper the truth.

"...Kinda." she considers this not a lie, as after her vision, she'd slept peacefully.

"Nightmare?" he asks, placing his utensils down onto the table, focus drawn to her.

Her trademark edge-smirk plays at her mouth. "Kinda." she repeats.

"Wanna talk about it?" Hopper asks. She waits a moment before nodding her head.

"I was in the void. Not my choice, sometimes I just end up there while sleeping." she begins. "It was empty at first but then I found Will behind me, sleeping."

"Oh?" Hopper's curiosity rises. She's not visited Will apart from

finding him in the Upside Down.

"I think he was having a nightmare." she adds. Hopper frowns slightly, feeling sorry for the kid. All that trauma, and he still can't be totally free of it.

"I went up to him and placed my hand on his shoulder. I was expecting him to disappear like they always do, but I felt him." she announces. His eyebrows furrow in confusion as she continues.

"He woke up and looked right at me, as if he saw me."

"Do you think he did, maybe?" Hopper asks. Nothing seems impossible these days, and when it comes to this girl, anything could happen.

"I don't know." she responds. "But then he vanished, and I was in the Upside Down."

Hopper's expression drops immediately. The thought alone of that place turns his stomach as he remembers the things he'd seen. An image of Will, dead with a vine nested into him flashes into his mind. He quickly shakes the thought away as he continues listening to El's story.

"I was in his bedroom, still by his bed. But Will was gone. Then I saw it." she tells him. Confusion returns to his face.

"Saw what?" he asks.

"The shadow monster." she answers. His eyebrows furrow again, and he seems angry at the thought. "It flew in through the window, I think it tried to get me." she seems worried now. He reaches over to place his hand on hers.

"Hey. He can't possibly get you now, surely. You slammed the door on his face!" he tries to reassure her, although he wonders if he's the one that needs reassuring.

She glances at him and her edge-smile returns for a moment. "It flew around me, it got so close but then I woke up."

He smiles slightly, glad that all it had done was surround her. "So it didn't touch you?"

She shrugs. "I don't think so."

He removes his hand from hers and sits back in his chair. "Good." he responds simply. She waits for a moment, before announcing the decision she'd made last night.

"I want to see Will."

He nods his head slightly. "You want to talk to him about it? See if he did see you?" he can read El like a book most of the time. She nods her head.

"I want to check on him. I think... Maybe he was dreaming about the Upside Down, and when I touched him, I saw his nightmare." she states, unsure of her own thoughts.

He nods his head again. "God, things don't stop getting stranger with you, do they?" he jokes, earning a smirk from El. "I'll talk to Joyce whenever I can. I've got to go straight to the station first to start on a few things but as soon as I can, I'll pop down to the Byers and have a word." he confirms.

She smiles and nods her head. "Thank you."

"No problem, kiddo." he responds, before they both continue their breakfast.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

This story is continued in the next work of the series.

### **Author's Note:**

Please consider leaving kudos and/or a comment of your thoughts and feedback; they definitely help encourage me to write more!

Love you all <3